Boundless Access to Literacy: 15 Tools You Can Use to Enhance Literacy Instruction

Wiki address: [www.SoMirac.wikispaces.com](http://www.SoMirac.wikispaces.com)

Blog Address: <http://somirac2011.blogspot.com/>

**Digital Audiobooks**

*What is it?*

Digital audiobooks are recordings (MP3 or AAC format) of a reading of the full text or of an abridgement of a book.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

Audiobooks can be used to increase motivation, vocabulary, fluency, and strengthen oral language skills. Offering a fluent model and encouraging students to follow along with the printed text is a research proven strategy for increasing words correct per minute, language development for ELLs, and increasing motivation (Carbo, 1978; Chomsky, 1976; Esteves, 2009; Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, & Baker, 2000).

*What are some resources?*

Lit2Go (etc.usf.edu/lit2go) - free online collection of poems, stories, and novels in MP3 format.

LibriVox.org - offers free audiobooks from public domain works, created by volunteers.

iTunes and Recordedbooks.com

**Playaway Audio**

*What is it?*

Playaway is a separate, self-contained device that holds one audiobook. Each Playaway comes with the content pre-loaded and a battery to make it play.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

Playaways can be used in the same way as audiobooks. It is a good option for school libraries given its ease of use and durability.

*What are some resources?*

<http://school.playaway.com/>

**eBook Readers**

*What is it?*

Hand-held hardware devices specifically designed to store and display eBooks; vary in size, display quality, and features.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

Many eBook readers have capabilities such as note-taking, bookmarking, and search capabilities. Students can digitally annotate books, look up definitions to unknown words, and use search features to seek out explanations of unfamiliar concepts. Some eBook readers also have audio features which enable a student to listen to text read aloud.

*What are some resources?*

See the eBook device comparison handout

**eBooks**

*What is it?*

A file of a printed book in electronic (digital) format; eBooks can be read on specialized reader devices, computers, or other hand-held devices such as iPods or cell phones

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

eBooks can be used in the same way as traditional books, but students can benefit from the portability of books in the digital format.

*What are some resources?*

[http://www.barnesandnoble.com/ebooks/index.asp](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/ebooks/index.asp" \t "_blank)

[http://www.amazon.com/kindle-store-ebooks...](http://www.amazon.com/kindle-store-ebooks-newspapers-blogs/b/ref=sa_menu_ks2/187-0478797-9063861?_encoding=UTF8&node=133141011&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=left-nav-1&pf_rd_r=0YWHZXYDBTJ2KVAN9QAE&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=328655101&pf_rd_i=507846)

<http://www.ebooks.com/aff.asp?AID=11732>

<http://www.ereader.com/>

**Polleverywhere & Clicker Systems**

*What is it?*

A free audience response system that uses mobile phones, twitter, and the web. Teachers and students might use this in the classroom for presentations.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Survey audience knowledge: pre and post
* Allow for public display of questions via text messaging

*What are some resources?*

[www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)

**Skype**

*What is it?*

A software program that allows voice or face-to-face interaction through the Internet. The service is free. You’ll need to sign up with a password and user name.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Invite guests “into” the classroom (ex: Superintendent to read a book to students from another location)
* Students invite guests as part of presentation about a particular topic
* Invite other classes(through Skype) to view student presentations

*What are some resources?*

[www.Skype.com](http://www.Skype.com)

**Wikis**

*What is it?*

Free software, which allow users to store information on a site accessible by many other users. A wiki is meant to be used as a collaborative tool for writing and many users may participate. There is not a single author to the work (Thorne, 2009). Wikipedia is one example, but anyone can create a wiki for a particular purpose and may limit the users who are invited to the site through special settings.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Teachers may create class wikis for particular projects or as a “storage” area to share ideas with one another within the same building, around the district, and beyond.
* Students may also create them for class use. For example, members of a book club might create a wiki to share the information that they have gathered related to their reading. This wiki was created to show how members of a book club might share their work. <http://thebreadwinner2.wikispaces.com>

*What are some resources?*

[www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com)

[www.pbwikispaces.com](http://www.pbwikispaces.com)

**Blogs \_\_\_**

*What is it?*

First known as WebLogs, blogs are web pages that change frequently and the dated entries are listed in reverse chronological order (Herring et al., 2004) Blogs serve as venues to allow commentary/discussion, pictures, video about a particular topic. Blogging is another kind of writing assignment where writing can be posted in a community and where it can be commented upon and revisited (Thorne, 2009)

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Students might use as a reflective communicative tool with one another in small groups. The teacher sets parameters for the discussion.
* There are also Blogs that promote the use of visuals whereby students add text to visuals such as used in Scrapblog.
* Teachers might start a blog to focus on a particular topic of interest; maybe a book club topic that has to do with an interest all have in common that might promote the work they do within their practice.

*What are some resources?*

[www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

[www.scrapblog.com](http://www.scrapblog.com)

**Mobile Apps**

*What is it?*

App is really a generic term for any standalone bit of software, a mobile app is software running on a mobile device or other platform (for example, an iPad or smartphone)

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

The possibilities are endless! Apps exist for just about any area of literacy from sight word reading to vocabulary development. A teacher can suggest free apps for parents to download on their own devices or students’ devices.

*What are some resources?*

[http://www.bestkidsapps.com](http://www.bestkidsapps.com/)

<http://www.brighthub.com/education/k-12/articles/62720.aspx>

**Visuword, VocabGrabber, Online Dictionary \_\_**

*What is it?*

As vocabulary enhancers, these programs assist students with finding meaning in words. Some programs, like dictionary.com, offer audio for word pronunciation.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Assists students in building vocabulary knowledge; meaning and pronunciation
* Assists students in finding synonyms and antonyms

*What are some resources?*

[www.visuwords.com](http://www.visuwords.com)

[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

<http://www.visualthesaurus.com/vocabgrabber/>

**Digital Storytelling**

*What is it?*

Digital Storytelling refers to digital tools that can be used to tell stories with visual and auditory support.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

Students can use software to retell a favorite part of a story, create their own chapter of a book, or tell their own story.

*What are some resources?*

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.mspx>

<http://voicethread.com/>

**Babblefish or Google Translator**

*What is it?*

This is a free software program that will translate languages. The programs are not always 100 percent accurate, but become so with each new update.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

This may be a program to use with your English Language Learners while working together in groups; a way to differentiate instruction. Other uses: newsletters and other information can be translated for parents. Students may want to take part in assisting with this.

*What are some resources?*

[www.babblefish.com](http://www.babblefish.com)

[www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com) (this also has an auditory component allowing for a reading of the message in the chosen language(s).

**Animoto**

*What is it?*

Pictures and words put into a “movie” format with music. Pictures and music can be accessed from the site or may be imported from personal pictures or other digital pictures and audio. Or pictures may be imported from a site like Photobucket but you may need to know if your firewall allows for that site.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

Students may use pictures and text to make connections to literacy work that is a focus within class. They may create these individually or in small groups and then showcase them as a class. This is a free resource if using the 30 second format.

*What are some resources?*

[www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com)

**Handheld Electronic Dictionaries \_**

*What is it?*

These are stand alone dictionaries in an electronic form…no internet connection is needed. The Franklin dictionary is an example of an electronic dictionary. It features audio that speaks words and phrases. It also features a thesaurus and provides assistance with both English and Spanish.

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Provides electronic dictionary assistance
* English Language Learners may find this helpful for translation

*What are some resources?*

<http://www.franklin.com/estore/dictionary/BES-2150/>

**Wordle**

*What is it?*

A free online program that allows the user to create “word clouds” with the text that is provided. The more times a word is typed into the program, the larger it becomes in the cloud of words. It can be arranged in artistic ways and then printed for display (see use in example for Breadwinner)

*How might I use it to enhance my literacy instruction?*

* Work with spelling to create familiarity
* Student pull words that are important to the story or that they want to more about (maybe one’s job in a book club or reading group)
* Create and display with other work they’ve done with the unit

*What are some resources?*

[www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)

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